

**FOUNDERS CELEBRATION
MAX BELL HALL - PEARSON COLLEGE**

08/09/2015

**SPEECH BY DÉSIRÉE MCGRAW
PRESIDENT AND HEAD OF COLLEGE**

Thank you, Tony, for that generous introduction.

And thank you, Professor Bothwell, for that fascinating account of the public life of Lester B. Pearson's story — a Canadian leader I admire greatly not only as an international statesman, but as the architect of many key social programs that still impact our lives: universal healthcare, the Canada Pension Plan, student loans and bilingualism — and of course our national flag.

Valued members of the Pearson Community — Board members, faculty, staff, supporters, and, above all, alumni: Good afternoon, or as we say in my native Quebec, *Bonjour! Je suis ravie d'être parmi vous aujourd'hui et quelle belle et brillante journée!*

As you know, I just arrived at Pearson a week ago. I am thrilled to finally have my feet on the ground in this glorious place that is to become home for my family and me.

I feel extremely privileged to have the opportunity to lead Pearson College. I appreciate the contributions of some of the extraordinary directors who preceded me—two of whom are with us today. And I truly embrace the responsibility, not only to uphold the tremendous legacy of the past 40 years, but also to advance it.

I want to see the College's profile and contribution to Canada and the world flourish during my tenure. I realize that is ambitious, but I know that there is already a team of smart, passionate and committed people here on the ground at the College to help me build on the incredible accomplishments that have made Pearson the force it is in the world today. I am also grateful that I will be able to rely on Pearson's exceptional and tireless Board of Directors, Patrons, alumni, partners and supporters. We benefit tremendously from the longstanding support of our community in so many forms: from local volunteers and host families who welcome our students into their homes to those who serve on selection

committees around the world; and, of course, our many donors. Your support is more essential than ever.

As we build our vision for the next 40 years, I have three primary objectives that will be guiding our collective work:

- To enhance our public profile and engagement
- To ensure that our program—both academic and experiential—is world-class and cutting-edge
- To ensure the College is on a sustainable financial footing.

PUBLIC PROFILE

There was a time when most Canadians were aware of Pearson College. The public understood its role as a living, evolving symbol of Canadian values and its mission to make education a force for global change.

Forty years on, in a very different and ever more complex world, the mission of this College is more critical than ever. For this reason, in my capacity as Chief Champion of Pearson College, I am making it my mission to ensure potential students, prospective donors, government sponsors and our friends and supporters know about the kind of educational and life experiences we are providing here in Pedder Bay and the impact our alumni are having around the world.

PROGRAM

I had the opportunity to spend some time with our students and faculty before they left for the summer, and was struck by their level of intellectual curiosity and engagement—and their longing to make a difference. Their passion is infectious. It makes me truly excited about the possibilities in front of us. Like the alumni in this room, and the other almost 4,000 Pearson Scholars, every one of this cohort of students will leave here with a profound understanding of what it means to be a true global citizen in today's world.

That world is a very different place than when we began in 1974. The International Baccalaureate—which Pearson helped to pioneer—is projected to have 10,000 programs worldwide by the year 2020. In addition, most of the top national and international schools now have community service as part of their curriculum. Pearson set these precedents and now it finds itself in an increasingly crowded field of organizations and programs working to educate and engage the next generation of leaders and change agents.

So, to fulfill our mandate in a present-day context, we have to take the spirit of renewal

that is already palpable on campus and run with it.

Our challenge, then, is to be willing to evaluate and consider the way we do things so that we can carve a path to ensure Pearson remains a global innovator in leadership education far into the future.

We are going to achieve this by doing what we do best at Pearson: by being open-minded and fearless.

Forty years ago, there was a vision to create a school unlike any other in Canada. That was brave. It was inspired, imaginative and, yes, risky.

We, too, must be brave, imaginative and prepared to take risks.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Of course, our quest to remain cutting edge is contingent on a foundation of financial stability. We can dream up all the leadership programming we want, but without a solid financial footing, we will not be able to execute our plans.

Cutting-edge costs money. So does the ability to support deserving students from diverse socio-economic and demographic backgrounds. Having a deliberate mix of students is central to what we do here, and essential to two of the most important lessons Pearson students learn here: tolerance and respect for difference.

We are counting on your financial support to help us to continue to provide these opportunities.

We also need your support for our campus renewal plan. While I imagine that it is nostalgic, and maybe even comforting for some of you to return and see a relatively unchanged campus, if you look closely, and maybe not so closely, you will see that we need some serious upgrades. The fact is, 40 years on, this beautiful Ron Thom-Barry Downs-designed campus is looking tired.

The exception is the recently renovated Calgary House. On your way to the reception in the dining hall, I invite you to have a look at the student residence immediately opposite. The DA Architects redesign has been faithful to the original architectural vision and simultaneously provides much more light and greater comfort for the students. It is also much less costly to run and maintain.

Every single building on campus needs this kind of upgrade.

CONCLUSION

As the brand-new President and Head of Pearson College, I have a lot of listening and learning ahead of me as we embark on a period of reflection, examination and, ultimately, action.

Who better to start listening to than those of you here today—our Founders, our donors, our Pearson family, our UWC community—those of you who are passionately committed to this institution? Your guidance will serve as a rudder as we explore uncharted waters and create new ways of operating that will allow us to continue to be global trailblazers in leadership education.

I hope you will join me on the journey.

I truly look forward to hearing your stories and gleaning your wisdom as we envision the next 40 years.

Merci!

Warmly,



DÉSIRÉE MCGRAW

PRESIDENT AND HEAD OF COLLEGE,
PEARSON COLLEGE UWC